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To: Early Education and Care Program Directors  
Preschool Center Directors  
From: Amy Kershaw, Acting Commissioner  
Department of Early Education and Care  
Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Pejman Talebian, MA, MPH, Director  
Immunization Division, Department of Public Health  
Re: 2022-2023 Early Education and Care/Preschool Immunization Survey  
Date: September 2022

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The annual public and private **Childcare/Preschool Immunization Survey** is conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Immunization Division. The purpose of this survey is to ensure that all children enrolled in these facilities are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. These data are publicly available on the Immunization Division website.

Regulations established by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and the Department of Public Health require that:

- 1) licensees must maintain immunization records for all children enrolled in their program; and
- 2) all children must be age-appropriately immunized to attend, unless they have a medical or religious exemption.

These regulations are designed to prevent illness and disruptions caused by diseases. The Department of Public Health supports a "no shots-no entry" policy for children attending early education and care programs or preschools.

**Immunization Requirements for Entry to Early Education and Care Programs or Preschool for Children 2 Years and Older**

- 4 or more doses of DTaP
- 3 or more doses of polio
- 1 dose of MMR
- 1 to 4 doses of Hib (depending on the age when doses are received)

- 3 doses of hepatitis B
- 1 dose of varicella (chickenpox) vaccine or physician-certified history of chickenpox disease

### **Recommended Vaccine**

- 1 dose of influenza vaccine for the current influenza season administered before December 31<sup>st</sup>
- COVID-19 vaccine primary series (and booster) for those who are eligible

Please see the MDPH document *Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements 2022-2023* for additional details (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/immunization-requirements-for-school-entry-0/download>).

### **Every Student Succeeds Act**

Please note that unimmunized or partially immunized homeless children and children in foster care attending a **public school** preschool program cannot be denied entry to public schools if they do not have immunization records. The federal **Every Student Succeeds Act** states that if a child or youth who is homeless or in foster care arrives lacking immunizations or medical records, the parent/guardian should be referred to the district's Homeless Education Liaison/foster care point of contact, who has the responsibility to obtain relevant academic records and immunizations or medical records and to ensure that students who are homeless or in foster care are attending school while the records are obtained. The student must be enrolled and permitted to attend public school in the interim. Additionally, EEC licensed programs are allowed a 6 month grace period from time of enrollment to obtain immunization records for any children who are homeless or in foster care at the time of entering care.

If you have any questions about the Every Student Succeeds Act, please contact the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) at (781) 338-3700 or [compliance@doe.mass.edu](mailto:compliance@doe.mass.edu).

Before- and after-school programs are not expected to complete the immunization survey if immunization records are on file at each child's school. If your program falls into this category, please disregard the survey invitation and contact the MDPH Immunization Data Assessment Unit at [immassessmentunit@mass.gov](mailto:immassessmentunit@mass.gov) to remove your program from our contact list. Although you do not need to complete the survey, you are still responsible for ensuring the immunization records are on file at each child's school.

### **Survey Deadline**

**The standard childcare immunization survey is due by January 27, 2023.** Influenza vaccination information will be collected in a second section – the “**flu survey**” – of the standard immunization survey, which can be completed at the same time or subsequent to completion of the standard immunization survey. **The flu survey is also due January 27, 2023.**

### **Adult Staff Guidelines**

Following EEC regulations, **all early education and care staff must provide proof of immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella.** Questions regarding staff immunity to measles, mumps, and rubella are included in the annual immunization survey. Information and

instructions about how to collect and report this information are available on the MDPH website. Go to <https://www.mass.gov/lists/school-immunization-surveys>, then scroll down to Childcare Staff Instructions and Worksheet.

### **Immunization Survey Results**

In 2021-2022, immunization records were reviewed from 80,329 children enrolled in licensed group early education and care programs and preschools across Massachusetts. Cumulative responders from 1,731 centers are listed in the table below and posted on the Immunization Division webpage (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/school-immunizations>).

### **Results from Immunization Survey of Children $\geq 2$ Years of Age Enrolled in Licensed Group Child Care /Preschool**

School Year	No. of Records Reviewed	$\geq 4$ DTaP	$\geq 3$ Polio	1 MMR	$\geq 3$ Hib	3 Hep B	Immunity to chicken-pox*	$\geq 4$ DTaP and $\geq 3$ Polio and 1 MMR	Medical Exemptions	Religious Exemptions
2021-22	80,329	96.2%	97.4%	95.9%	96.0%	96.8%	96.8%	93.4%	0.17%	0.77%
2020-21	54,941	97.3%	97.5%	98.3%	97.2%	97.0%	97.9%	94.9%	0.27%	0.97%

\* Immunity to chickenpox disease includes children who have a documented physician-certified reliable history of chickenpox disease, or 1 dose of varicella vaccine.

While the rate of religious exemptions has remained relatively steady in recent years, we encourage schools and programs to review their policies and practices regarding exemptions, including the recommendation to have families renew these annually. The resources below are available to help with communication with parents lacking vaccine confidence:

- *Personal belief exemptions for vaccination put people at risk. Examine the evidence for yourself* <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2069.pdf>
- *What if you don't immunize your child?* <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4017.pdf>
- *Childhood vaccine information for parents and caregivers* – a page of resources <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/childhood-vaccine-information-for-parents-and-caregivers>

Massachusetts school immunization requirements have been very effective in preventing the outbreak of vaccine-preventable diseases. Continued enforcement of the immunization requirements is essential to the health of our children.

Your efforts in completing this survey contribute to protecting our children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Please use the survey worksheets and instructions to help complete the survey accurately. **Please retain copies of the survey and worksheets to facilitate follow-up on children and staff not fully immunized.** You may be chosen for a randomized audit of immunization records or be called to review your records by MDPH Immunization Division staff. If you have any questions, please contact the MDPH Data Assessment Unit by email at [immassessmentunit@mass.gov](mailto:immassessmentunit@mass.gov).